

What is a PSO?

PSOs are federally certified entities that share the goal of improving the safety and quality of health care delivery by collecting, aggregating and analyzing health care event data (*aka* Patient Safety Work Product or PSWP) without the fear of legal discovery, to enable the identification and reduction of patient and consumer care risks and hazards.

Do PSOs receive federal funding?

No, PSOs do not receive any federal funding.

How do PSOs differ from other quality improvement programs like HIINs and QIN-QIOs?

Both HIINs and QIN-QIOs perform commissioned work under CMS contracts. The contracts dictate the specific topics and conditions of focus for each 5-year period. HIINs are geared towards acute care inpatients while QIN-QIOs focus exclusively on Medicare patients.

PSOs, on the other hand, are not confined in scope, duration, or patient type. Moreover, to support learning and sharing from safety events, patient safety activities are afforded unique federal legal protections.

What are the benefits of a PSO membership?

Working with the TQC PSO offers many benefits, including:

- Shared Learning**
The PSO facilitates a shared-learning approach at a local, state and national level where hospitals and providers can learn from each other, make faster improvements and reduce the cost of learning. Our “Safe Tables” provide a unique forum that facilitate shared learning in a protected space.
- Pooled expertise**
Members tap into the collective intelligence of patient safety experts and innovators, translating into exponential improvements clinically and economically. The TQC PSO also works with state hospital associations, universities, government agencies, other PSOs.
- Legal Protections**
The Patient Safety Act provides two types of protection; confidentiality and privilege protections. The Health and Human Services Office of Civil Rights monitors the confidentiality provisions and privilege protections are enforced by the judicial system, which limit or forbid the use of protected information in criminal, civil, administrative or other proceedings. ([Patient Safety Rule Section 3.206](#)).
- Data analysis for prevention**
The PSO collects detailed patient safety data unavailable through regular public channels. This rich data set allows the PSO to identify patterns that could suggest underlying or systemic causes of patient risks and hazards to prevent their future occurrence and reduce patient harm.
- Unique benefit to small hospitals**

We know staff in smaller hospitals often wear many hats. Working with the TQC PSO helps smaller hospitals deliver high quality care and meet regulatory and accreditation demands by providing often needed patient safety and quality resources.

What specific protections do I receive by belonging to a PSO?

The Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act of 2005 (PSQIA), Public Law 109-41 and rule provide privilege and confidentiality protections to specific types of information developed when a provider works with a PSO, such as the data collected and reported to PSOs by providers and the communications and feedback a provider receives from the PSO. Subject to certain specific exceptions, the data reported to PSOs may not be used in criminal, civil, administrative, or disciplinary proceedings. (see [Patient Safety Rule Section 3.206](https://www.pso.ahrq.gov/faq#privacy-purpose)). (<https://www.pso.ahrq.gov/faq#privacy-purpose>)

What is the importance of the privacy and confidentiality protections for data?

The strong privacy and confidentiality protections are intended to encourage greater participation and robust data submission by creating a psychologically and legally safe space to report and discuss safety events. *By establishing strong protections, providers may engage in more detailed discussions about the causes of adverse events without the fear of liability.* Ultimately, participation will result in more opportunities to identify and address the causes of adverse events, thereby improving patient safety overall.

What kind of data/information is collected by the TQC PSO?

- The TQC PSO currently collects data based on AHRQ’s “common formats”. Adverse events include occurrences that take place in acute-care settings, such as retained foreign object after surgery, as well as events that occur across the continuum of care such as falls and pressure ulcers.
- The PSO collects data on “near misses,” which are events that could have caused harm but do not reach the patient.
- Root Cause Analysis (RCAs) are also collected and analyzed.

What kind of educational courses does TQC PSO offer?

TQC PSO offers in-person workshops, in-person Safe Table discussions, and virtual webinars. Topics are generally derived from a review of the adverse events and near misses submitted by PSO members.

Recent topics have included:

- Retained Surgical Items
- Falls Prevention
- Patient Violence & Aggression
- MRI Safety
- Handoff Communications
- Managing Behavioral Health Patients in Non-Behavioral Health Settings
- Failure to Rescue
- RCA & Action
- PSO Confidentiality Training
- Alternatives to Opioid Pain Management
- Care of the Caregiver
- Health Information Technology Frustrations